

TESTIMONY

Senate Bill 301

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee:

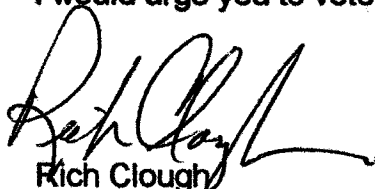
I rise in opposition to SB 301, a bill to put a moratorium on fee title acquisitions by MT Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP) until 2013.

I fail to see the purpose of such a moratorium, but do see some real potential harm to the residents, and particularly, the sportsmen of Montana. Land acquired by MFWP provides habitat protection for Montana's wildlife and allows public access to such lands for hunting, fishing and general recreation. The sportsmen provide the funding for purchase of such land, and, at times, combine that funding with matching Federal dollars. The land purchased by MFWP continues on the respective County's tax roll.

Most sportsmen and women are unable to afford ownership of a ranch or farm for the purpose of protecting wildlife and providing recreational pursuits. By participating in the acquisition of lands through license dollars, sportsmen and women are able to have areas that meet their desires, without the responsibilities associated with owning a ranch or farm. That's not to say the lands acquired are not used for commercial purposes, since most Wildlife Management Areas have grazing programs for cattle with neighboring ranchers, and in some cases, have farming activities that are consistent with wildlife values.

Lands that afford both wildlife and recreational values are usually acquired from willing sellers that share the land ethic with MFWP. These opportunities arise at any time, and to disallow such possibilities, even for two years, is neither beneficial to our resources or to landowners that may seek this alternative in disposing of their land. And it is most detrimental to the sportsmen and women of Montana.

I would urge you to vote no on this bill. Thank you.



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